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House and family: two different Western-European rural models. Westphalia (North-western Germany) and Groningen (North-Netherlands), 1780 – 1850

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Abstract

This paper aims at comparing relationships between families and houses in the Dutch province of Groningen and the Prussian province of Westphalia, suggesting that rural societies can adhere to two completely different models. In Groningen, houses were perceived as capital, floating on markets, bought and sold up to prevailing situations of families and individuals. In Westphalia, on the contrary, families were strongly attached to their farms and houses, keeping them within the family as the economic basis and connecting to them as a social unit. We do not only focus on peasants and their farms, but also on the relation of labourers and other occupational groups with their house in pre-modern villages. The paper contains three sections. First, the house is discussed as a place to work and live, where production and consumption was performed by members of the family. Second, we investigate the form and degree of attachment of families to houses in practise. In the last section we consider the role of the house and farm in the local social welfare and retirement system.

1. Introduction

In agricultural societies farmsteads and land are the core of the economic system, and form the main source of wealth. The amount of land at disposal (either owned or rented) is decisive, not only determining social status, but also as the main means of existence, influencing the standard-of-living. Consequently, the system that organizes the distribution of the control of land between the inhabitants is of utter importance for the well-being of different groups of people in society. However, as the distribution of land is in nearly every countryside very unequal, it is not only the control of land and farmsteads, but also of houses as places to live, give shelter and often to work that play a large role for the poorer parts of the population.

The central system of organising life in the countryside is of course (like anywhere else) the family, either defined as the conglomerate of all near and more distant relatives, or as the group of (related) persons living in a household. The last definition points already at the importance of the house, as the place where near family members (husband, wife and children, but perhaps also grandfathers, grandmothers, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces) are living together and are organising joint consumption and perhaps also produc-

tion. In this paper we want to investigate what role the house as a building (with or without land) actually played for rural families from different social signature, not only in the short run, but also in the long run.

There are good reasons to think that the relation between the house and the family not only differed between social groups, but that there were also large regional differences. We will concentrate ourselves on two regions that, although they are not very far apart (about 250 kilometres), are strongly diverging. On the one hand we studied seven small villages in the Eastern Marne situated in the province of Groningen, a part of the previously relatively very wealthy and modern coastal Netherlands, however in the end of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century the Dutch were losing their prime position rapidly. Nevertheless, the agriculture in Dutch coastal countryside remained heavily market-oriented. On the other hand we selected two larger Westphalian villages lying 90 kilometres apart in the interior of Germany, a country that was in the first half of the century slowly recovering economically, although industrialisation was still to come. Since both villages were part of the Western Prussian province of Westphalia, they had similar (although not identical) institutional and political conditions. However, they had a quite diverging economic structure. The economy of the quite wealthy village of Borgeln is purely based on agriculture and self-provision plays a main role, while in the economy of the much poorer village of Löhne proto-industry was of great importance.

After giving a more in depth overview of the societies studied, we are first going to look at what role the house as a building played in the family economy (comprising both consumption and production). Second, we investigate the form and degree of attachment of families to houses in practise, by looking at the succession of heads of households living in a building. Next, we consider the role of the house and farm in the local social welfare and retirement system. Eventually, we will try to draw some conclusions about the two strongly diverging systems of the relation between family and house existing in Western-Europe that show up in the material we studied.

2. The local rural economies of Westphalia and Groningen compared

Both the Westphalian and Groningen countryside experienced considerable population growth from the last decades of the eighteenth century onwards. In the Eastern Marne population began to recover slowly around 1750, after more than half a century of decrease. In the eighties of eighteenth century population growth began to accelerate to about 1% annually, to only come to a stop a century later because of the agrarian depression of the 1880s. As the number of farmsteads increased only to a limited extent, this population growth mainly resulted in a rising share of farm labourer households. Numerous tiny labourer houses were being built in this period, villages grew enormously in size, and new settlements of a few small houses located nearer to the farmsteads came into being, like a hamlet literally called 'Kleine Huisjes' (small houses) in Kloosterburen.

Westphalian population developed in a similar way. Between 1818 and 1871, population in Westphalia rose by 1% annually, even though the strong growth of industrialized, urban centres started later. In the countryside, growth rates were smaller, but still remarkable. Löhne was part of the district of Herford, where population grew by 0.6% per year, although there was a considerable out-migration overseas starting in the 1840s. The district of Soest showed a population growth of 0.8% annually during this period. Before 1843, we observe growth rates of 1.1% in both districts, as out-migration to the United States and the Ruhr area did not yet damp the increase of population size (Reekers 1956, Küpker 2015). Like in rural Groningen most of this increase is to be found in the non-peasant group, since farms were not divided and only few new (and quite small) farmsteads have been built during this period. In comparison, population growth in the Westphalian countryside slowed down earlier than in Groningen, mainly due to out-migration starting in the middle of nineteenth century. In the Groningen countryside this net out-migration started also by that time, also often to the United States or to the cities, but became really massive only from 1880 onwards.

Table 1: Development of social structure and population in the Marne, Borgeln and Löhne.

	farmer house- holds	labourer house- holds	Other house- holds	Popula- tion	farmer house- holds	labourer house- holds	Other house- holds	Popula- tion
	1807	1807	1807	1807	1862	1862	1862	1860
Marne	22%	41%	37%	4,889	15%	48%	37%	7,554
	1807	1807	1807	1830	1860	1860	1860	1866
Borgeln	42.9%	48.0%	9.0%	1,255	29.1%	44.2%	26.7%	1,496
Löhne	43.0%	46.1%	10.9%	1,219	28.1%	68.1%*	3.8%*	1,466

NB: Paping (1995) 327: Eastern Marne forms about half the 3 municipalities in the Marne (Leens, Kloosterburen and Ulrum). Farmer households also include small farmers starting new farms (Löhne). Numbers for Westphalia are based on two family reconstitutions, since household lists are not available. Labourer households also include ‘*Heuerlinge*’ in Löhne.

* The small share of ‘other households’ might go back to lack of information in database for Löhne. Information on occupation ends in 1874, whereas in Borgeln we have data up to 1914, so some people with other occupation could be in the ‘labourer households’ category.

A substantial part of the households in Groningen were mainly depending on non-agrarian sources of income. Many artisans (tailors, shoemakers, smiths, coopers, bakers, carpenters, butchers), and some shopkeepers, merchants, inn-keepers, shippers, civil servants and a miller, reverend, schoolmaster and so on were living in each parish. In the much specialised economy of the Groningen coastal countryside – like in other parts of the Dutch coastal region – these non-agrarian households were solely supplying products and services to the farmsteads and the local inhabitants (Paping 1995). The large majority of this group did not have any land at its disposal. The regional export was restricted to agricultural products (grain, oil seed, meal, butter, cows, sheep) and the aim of farmers was to produce as much as possible for the market (also to pay the artisans and numerous agrarian wage workers). The importance of self-provision on the farms was rather restricted, and some of the food consumed (rye bread, meal, but also colonial food ingredients) even was bought.

In comparison, the occupational structure in Westphalian villages seems to be less clearly differentiated, mainly because many products for daily needs were still produced on the farm. In Eastern Westphalia (Löhne), families both cultivated grain and flaxseed on their farm and processed them, or they lived mainly from spinning and weaving. Only few people were referred to as bakers, smiths, carpenters, or millers. For example, poor families usually benefited from the baking days at one of the farms, bringing their dough to one of the peasants' bake houses. They had small parcels of land to cultivate vegetables and some rye, but they also had to buy foodstuff in addition. In Borgeln, most people lived from agricultural day labouring, but here we find in the course of nineteenth century a growing group of craftsmen. However, these craftsmen also often worked in agriculture at least part of their time and during seasonal work peaks. The local economy was mainly concentrated on the production of cash crops, and a substantial part of the local society was dependent on the labour market and on product markets. Nonetheless, farms here also had their own baking houses, as common in many parts of Westphalia. To sum up, the specialization of non-peasant households was less developed than in the Groningen area (Pfister/Bracht/C. Fertig/G. Fertig 2015).

In the eighteenth century, freehold farming was nearly completely absent in the Groningen countryside. The land was rented out by lords, urban patricians, local institutions, the provincial government and some wealthy countrymen, though in a rather peculiar way, resulting ultimately in the land users obtaining extremely strong property rights. At least since the end of the sixteenth century rented land was formally connected (*'beklemd'*) to a specific farmstead, while the quite expensive building itself was owned by the farmer family. Originally, money rents changed with the agricultural prices, but in the eighteenth century after a long period of falling prices they became increasingly fixed. While the strong property rights on the use of land of the farmers were also backed by legal decisions, land owners and farmers in the second half of the eighteenth century started to conclude contracts that stipulated that the right to use the land could be sold or inherited in anyway the farmer liked. In return for this guarantee land users paid considerable sums of money to the owners at that time and promised to pay the fixed money rent eternally.

With the rapid rise of agrarian prices from the last two decades of the eighteenth century onwards, the value of the right to use the land of the tenant began to dwarf the value of getting a fixed money rent of the land owner. In practice, this made land users the actual owners of the land at the expense of the old formal land owners. The tenants, however, did not receive the right to disconnect the land (being often rented out in very vast tracks of 20 to even more than 50 ha) from the farmstead, making it very hard to split farms into smaller pieces. Consequently, it was difficult to increase the number of farmsteads, and also the market for (very) small pieces of land was very restricted due to the institution of the *'beklemrecht'*.

Remarkably, for ordinary houses the same system existed. Usually the inhabitants owned the building, while they rented the piece of land on which it was erected for a fixed money rent from a local institution, noblemen or rich villager. Again, it was legally very difficult to expel a house owner from the land, making the property rights very secure. Even if the inhabiting family did not pay any rent (*'heemhuur'*) for a long period, the land did not return to the owner, but the house and the right to use the land was sold on a public auction, and out of the revenues the owner received his or her rents. These strong property rights were quite efficient, as they stimulated the users to build good houses as these were really their own, and

at the same time saved the land owners the difficult task of taking care of the maintenance of the buildings on the land. Another big advantage was that families needed to have less money to own a house or farmstead, as part of the value was in a sense in this system automatically borrowed from the land owner for a fixed annual sum.

In Westphalia, peasants held their farms within quite different systems of legal rights. Until the Napoleonic period peasants usually were subjects of personal dominion, meaning that they had certain personal obligations towards their lord, and were not free to go. These relations ended in the beginning of nineteenth century, but the lords' rights towards the land remained in effect for many years (Bracht 2013). The systems of manorial and property rights not only differed between, but also within regions. Sometimes noblemen owned the farms, and the peasants had only the right to use farm and land (*'Kolonatsrecht'*). In other cases both noblemen and peasants were co-owners of the real property, with lords having the so called *'Obereigentum'* (*'dominium directum'*) and peasants the *'Nutzeigentum'* (*'dominium utile'*). In general property rights were quite good. Peasants bequeathed their farms to their heirs, or handed it down, and the noblemen had little means to expel a peasant family from a farm. The land, however, was firmly attached to the farm, so it could not be sold, at least not without the (noble) owner's agreement, just like in Groningen.

In Westphalia, there was no (legal) land market in eighteenth century. In the course of the nineteenth century legal obstructions to sell land for reasons of manorial rights vanished slowly (G. Fertig 2007, 2013). But even if peasants were allowed to sell farm land, they did not make much use of this possibility in some regions as will be shown later on. During early nineteenth century, rents were still paid in kind, resulting in a much weaker dependence on the market, although the Prussian administration made some efforts to have rents converted to fixed rents or even abolished. Only in Löhne some peasants activated conversion before the 1830s, and here one of the lords insisted on conversion of many rents between 1832 and 1847. In this village, half of all rents had been fixed until 1850, and two out of three had been abolished (including rents that had been converted before). This means that 35% of the rents were still paid in kind in 1850. In Borgeln neither peasants nor lords had been too interested in touching the traditional rent system. The process started only in the 1840s, when a number of peasants had their rents converted into fixed rents. In 1850, 13% of all rents had been abolished, 35% (recently) converted into fixed rents, and 52% were still rents in kind. The Prussian administration enabled peasants and lords to fix or even abolish rents after the Napoleonic period, but both parties were not very interested during the first half of nineteenth century. Only after 1850, when legislation improved the conditions for peasants, most of the rents were abolished within a few years (Bracht 2013).

Houses and land were the most important economic assets in both regions and property rights were very well protected. In Groningen, the spouses were usually joint owners of the real estates, unless in the marriage contract different provisions were made. An unequal division of property happened only when a very large socio-economic difference between the families of bride and groom existed. Also land in full property – what was quite rare among non-nobles – remained owned by the marriage partner who brought it in or inherited it. Usually, the contracts stipulated that in case of any living off-spring the marriage partners possessed half of the joint possessions. Actually, these contracts were especially made up to regulate the division of the inheritance if there was no off-spring. Old Groningen medieval laws contained regulations which ordered that sons should inherit twice as much of the real estates than

daughters. However, about all the marriage contracts (with the exception of the ones of nobles) and wills mentioned that daughters and sons should be treated exactly similar. In the second half of the eighteenth century something between a quarter and a half of the couples, mostly the more wealthy ones, concluded a marriage contract a few weeks before the marriage date, which often was also signed by a lot of near family members (parents, brothers, sisters and so on). However, even in the case there was no marriage contract, sons and daughters received the same part of the paternal inheritance, and surviving parents were entitled to half the value of the joint possessions.

When in Groningen one of the spouses died, the surviving parents usually kept control of the whole inheritance, although legally the children possessed half of it according to the law. The survivor was legally entitled to do what he or she liked as *legitimus tutor / legitima tutrix* of his / her children below the age of about 25. In case of remarriage, the survivor was obliged to pay out this half when the children became 18, or at least at that time (s)he had to pay interest to the children. Upon remarriage an inventory was made up to calculate the exact money value of the whole inheritance. Every possession was valued including cloths, chairs and beds and also all the debts of the household were stated. Three appointed guardians had to take care that the rights of the children were not violated by the new marriage. In practise, without a remarriage, the children lend their part of the maternal or paternal inheritance nearly always back to the surviving parent, and the inheritance was often only divided upon the death of the last spouse. If the parents or the surviving parent for one reason or another were very liquid, parts of inheritance could already be paid out earlier, or a dowry could be given to the children.

By the time the paternal inheritance was divided, all these transfers and dowries were taken into account to establish to how much money each child was entitled. Also sometimes upon division, it was assumed that those children staying at home after the age of 18 were entitled to annual money wages (sons more than daughters) as they replaced live-in farmhands and maids who else had to be hired, considering these wages to be a liability of the inheritance. Who of the children received the house or farmstead did not pay any role in the division. The money value of the house or farmstead was calculated and considered to be part of the inheritance. Because of this, a succeeding child usually had to pay considerable sums to his or her siblings to obtain the paternal property.

In Westphalian Borgeln and Löhne the inheritance system was very similar, although there are some differences with regard to inheritance rights and fundamental differences concerning the inheritance practise. In Löhne and Borgeln, both men and women became owners of the property due to the joint marital property regime. After the death of one partner, the surviving spouse in Borgeln became joint owner with his or her children. In this case there was a difference between men and women: a widower got 50% of the fortune, a widow only 33%. The widowed parent usually went on managing the farm, including the children's share. As in Groningen, the rights of the children were highly secured in cases where the surviving parent married again, by establishing an inventory and authorizing a guardian to take care of the children's rights. This way the children's inheritance had to be paid later, mostly when they turned 24 and therefore reached majority. In most cases, however, the farm was managed by the parent until it was handed to one of the children. Then all family members made a contract, and mother or father and all siblings assigned their share of the family fortune to the farm successor. In return, the old peasant got a pension and the siblings compensation pay-

ments. These inheritance payments for siblings were quite high in the nineteenth century, making them attractive marriage partners in comparison to children of poor families.

In Löhne the legal situation was slightly different, with the surviving spouse as single owner of the family fortune. But again: if he or she wanted to marry again, an inventory was made and the inheritance rights of the children were secured. In practise, however, the widow or widower usually handed over the farm as soon as the designated successor was in a good position to take over the farm. So even if the legislation differed, there was almost no difference in inheritance practice. All children were treated equal, with women and men getting the same amount of inheritance payment. Only the farm successor is treated differently, getting the farm and with it a lot of obligations towards parents and siblings (Lünnemann 2006). In a lot of cases the transfer of the farm is closely connected to the marriage of the farm successor in Westphalia. There are two main reasons for this connection: First, the farm successor needed resources to pay out the large inheritance payments of his or her siblings, and often was depending on the marriage partner's inheritance. Second, the in-marrying partner wanted to be sure that his or her spouse would be the farm successor, and the farm was not given to another sibling eventually. In this Westphalian society, farms were transferred to children, but they were not sold on the market. So there were only two ways of becoming a peasant: to become a farm successor, or to marry a farm successor. This is a fundamental difference to the inheritance practise in Groningen, where farms were sold on the market and children could for example invest their inheritance payment to buy a farm, or use the expectation of receiving it to borrow money for this aim.

3. The house/farm as a place to work and live

The house was a place to work and live, where the production and consumption of the members of the family took place. Frequently, rural families were extended, either by close relatives or servants and other non-family members. In this respect we already see some substantial differences between the family/household-system in Groningen and Westphalia. In this section, we will discuss the role of the house for three distinct rural groups: farmers, landless or land-poor labourers, and others, for the most part craftsmen. For all three groups the house was a place of consumption and recovery, but not necessarily the location for productive work.

3.a. Farmer households

Farms could have very different sizes both in Groningen and in Westphalia. In Westphalia holdings larger than 1 ha can be considered as farms, smaller holdings as land-poor households. However, in Groningen the dividing line is usually put at 5 ha, as with less land it was difficult to sustain a household without alternative non-agrarian sources of income. Consequently, those using 1-5 ha often were craftsmen and merchants, and not agricultural smallholders. Within Westphalia, we also observe substantial differences. In 1830, farms in Borgeln (Soester Börde) made up for 43% of all holdings with land. The farms were larger in this region than in Eastern Westphalia, more than every second farm had more than 10 ha, about a

quarter was larger than 20 ha. The largest farm had 59 ha, of which 35 ha were arable land, 21 ha wood land, 1.5 ha meadow and 1.3 ha farmyard and garden. In Löhne, however, 60% of all holdings were larger than 1 ha, but most of them were rather small. Just about one out of ten farms had more than 10 ha, and the largest farm had only 25 ha of land. On this farm, 18 ha were arable land, 15 ha wood land, 8 ha heathland and 4 ha meadow. The farmyard including the garden made for another 2 ha.

The difference in land holding of Borgeln and Löhne with Groningen, however, was larger. More than 80% of all holdings in the Marne were larger than 1 ha, and at the same time 40% of those households had at least 10 ha, but not rarely more than 40 ha at its disposal. In Groningen statistics we find a majority of households with no land reported: in 1862 roughly 66% in the Marne – mainly landless farm labourers, but also petty artisans and others working outside agriculture. This group had at best only a small garden around the house at disposal. We already pointed at the system of fixed tenures which made it very difficult to acquire small pieces of land. Also not very helpful in this respect was that in the Groningen Marne all land was already cultivated, partly as arable land, partly as grassland.

Table 2: Land size of farms and small holdings in Groningen and Westphalia.

	Groningen 1862		Westphalia 1830-1845			
	Marne		Löhne		Borgeln	
No land	C. 1000		C. xx		C. xx	
< 1 ha	94	18.6%	41	27.5%	84	56.4%
1-5 ha	137	27.1%	53	35.6%	13	7.4%
5-10 ha	56	11.1%	34	22.8%	15	10.1%
10-20 ha	69	13.7%	19	12.8%	21	14.1%
20-40 ha	97	19.2%	2	1.3%	13	8.7%
40+ ha	52	10.3%	0	0.0%	5	3.4%
N	505		149		151	

Source: Bijdragen (1870); Land title registers and cadastre Löhne and Borgeln. The number of households without land was roughly estimated, taking into account population-size and estimated average household-size.

Many of the large farmers and their families in both Groningen a Westphalia could not only live from their agricultural production, but they even had to fall back on hiring additional labour. Although the farmer, his wife, the older sons and daughters and other relatives living in the household performed as much farm work as possible, this was often not enough to get all the work done. Farm size, ecotype and farmer family size together determined the number of servants and day labourers that had to be employed to take the most benefit of the land.

In both regions, we observe a broad range of socio-economic systems to hire waged farm labour. In general, we can distinguish between the integration of farmhands into the peasant's household, and sporadic or more or less continuous hiring of day labourers living in a different household. In Groningen, every family, either farmer or labourer, lived in a clearly

separated house, in Westphalia on the other hand this distinction was much less clear as complete labourer families sometimes inhabited part of the farm. Most of the larger farmers in Groningen employed unmarried live-in farm maids and hands, which number diverged from one to sometimes six or more (Paping 2005). These live-in servants were usually interchangeable with the sons and daughters of the farmer, as they performed the same kind of work on the farm and also in the household proper (maid). The fewer grown-up daughters were at home, the more maids were hired, and also the fewer grown-up sons, the more farmhands could be found on a farm (Van Nederveen Meerkerk & Paping 2014). Live-in farm servants of 15 year and older formed in total in the Marne 23% of the population above 15 year active in agriculture in 1862 (Bijdragen 1870).

In Westphalia, we see a similar system in Borgeln. One third of all adults living in the village worked and lived as unmarried servants on peasant farms, including many young people who had temporarily migrated to the countryside attracted by the possibility of earning relatively high incomes. Farm servants stayed on the farm, and had usually annual contracts. The maidservants mostly lived with the family, the farmhands in chambers above the cowsheds and horse stables. In the 1820s, during the establishment of the first Prussian cadastral survey (*cataster*), all communities had been visited by state officials, and their economic status recorded by officials. For Borgeln they stated that they found at least one ‘boy’, one groom and one maid on every farm. On middle-sized farms (in their opinion, 10–22 ha) they found two grooms, one farmhand, one boy, and two maidservants, and on large farms even three grooms and three maidservants instead of two. So the visitors saw at least three servants on peasant farms of more than 10 ha, up to eight servants on large farms.¹ In contrast, we find very few servants in Eastern Westphalian Löhne, making up for only about 3 percent of the adult population. There was only one maid on a small farm, and even on the few larger farms (which were much smaller than in Borgeln, however), they found only four or five servants. Altogether, servants were a rather small group in this region.²

Both in Groningen and Westphalia farmer families and servants shared their meals until well into the nineteenth century, when the habit of sitting together on the same table started to dissolve. At the same time, farmer families started to separate their living space from their servants and also from the stables of their cattle (Sauermann 1978). Unfortunately we don’t have any household lists for this period for our Westphalian villages, but there is some evidence that peasants kept their offspring rather on the farm, than having them working for other peasants. So most of the servants either were children of the many day labourer families in the village, just like in Groningen where nearly all live-in farm personnel were recruited from the landless farm labourer families, or they had migrated from other places. For the nearby small town of Soest an astonishing absence of young men (but a lot of female servants) has been found, and it is very likely that many of them worked in the countryside for several years (Jarren and Wex 2002).

¹ Wertschätzungsprotokolle 1828.

² Wertschätzungsprotokolle Mennighüffen 1824/26.

3.b. Households of labourers and ‘Heuerlinge’

For both rural societies in Westphalia and Groningen the importance of outside-the-household labourers has to be stressed. Next to the farmer family and the servants living in the household a considerable amount of the farm work was done by members of farm labourers families who were not part of the farmer household, but had a household of their own. Both in Groningen and the central Westphalian place (Borgeln) we found that more than half of the families had no landed property at all (table 2). Consequently, there was very a large supply of male and female labour on the local farm labour market. In Eastern Westphalian Löhne on the other hand, with only nearly 40% of the households without any land, many (near) landless families lived by a mixture of yarn spinning and day labouring, and they were closely attached to farms through a special system combining renting some living space, working obligations and social support in times of need. In this section we will take a closer look at these non-peasant families living from either or both agricultural wage work and protoindustrial work.

Houses of Groningen landless labourers were only tiny, only having the function of a place to live, but they were proper houses, built of stone and the cheaper ones sometimes partly of lime. Images of these houses are scarce before 1900, but two very detailed maps from about 1730 of Oldenklooster and Molenrij (both in the parish of Kloosterburen) show small versions of farms, with a sloping roof and presumably a small loft underneath it (Schroor 1996). These houses were clearly set apart from the farms, who themselves were quite evenly scattered over the landscape. Thanks to a reconstruction of the history of land and houses for the Eastern Marne, it is exactly known where all the houses were standing in the period 1757-1832. Only a few labourer houses were situated near a specific farm, while most of them were concentrated in villages or small hamlets. Labourer houses and households were in this way clearly separated from the farmsteads on which the family members found their work. Labourer families cultivated some food (vegetables and potatoes) in their gardens lying around the house (plots were nearly always less than 0.1 ha, often only 0.05 ha), and some of them rented a small potato field from the farmers they worked for. They usually did not own any livestock and were nearly wholly depending on wage work for their living. For (regular) farm labourers with an annual contract land use could be part of the reward for their daily work. Although we do not have precise figures, the majority of the adult and usually married labourers worked casually for one or more farms, and did not have work during part of the winter.

On working days the labourers usually ate their meals on the farms of their employers. A consequence was that male labourers were usually well fed, while the available food for females – who only could find work during the part of the summer half year – and young children eating in the labourer houses was only limited. However, in the course of the second quarter of the nineteenth century this eating at the farm became less and less usual. Money wages without receiving any extra food were substantially higher than daily wages with food supplied, so the new system gave better opportunities to feed the rest of the family. As the food situation in the labourer households was very bad, and farmers were not inclined to hire juvenile labourers on a daily basis, there was a strong incentive to remove teenage daughters and sons from the house as fast as possible though the lifecycle servant system with annual contracts. Consequently, only few children of 16 and older lived in the paternal households,

and the labourer households were on average very small with 3.9 members (N=1076), compared to the 6.8 members found in farmer households (N=537).³

In complete contrast with the Groningen system, in some Westphalian regions the whole household of landless families was very closely attached to a specific farm, encompassing manifold relations between peasants and these landless families; in other parts, however, farmers took unmarried servants in to husband their large farms and had, in addition, rather loose relations to day labourers, a system at first sight rather similar to that in Groningen, though with regard to living places of these day labourers there were large differences as we will see. First we will look more closely at the quite peculiar '*Heuerling*' system, found in those parts of north-western Germany where proto-industrial production of yarn and linen formed a large part of economic activities from at least the middle of eighteenth century onwards, and later on we will focus on day labourers.

The upturn of proto-industrial production in north-western Germany enabled many young people to establish a new household, especially in regions where opportunities in agriculture were limited for landless couples. Spinning yarn and weaving linen was a viable basis to make a living for a young family, usually in combination with occasional agricultural work. Although there is little research on how widespread this so called *Heuerling* system was, there is evidence that it was an important part of social structure in Löhne as in many north-western German regions (Schlumbohm 1994; Escher 1984; Könenkamp 1997; Seraphim 1947; Wrasmann, 1919, 1921). A *Heuerling* family usually rented a house, or part of a house, placed not far from the peasant farm. The proximity to the farm house was crucial, because the obligation to work on demand was an important component of the tenancy. Peasants called or whistled when they needed labourers, and every member of the family who was capable of work was expected to be on the spot. In this sense the *Heuerling* family was not part of the peasant's household, but nonetheless closely connected to the peasant farm. The rent had at least in part to be paid by agricultural work, but the lion's share of household income was achieved by spinning and weaving. Since most houses also had gardens and even small pieces of arable land, the families could complement their income as part of a kind of subsistence economy. In this sense, the income of these landless was based on these three components, and part of a special system of houses-beyond-the-farm.

Since *Heuerling* families had no landed property, information on their whereabouts is rather scarce. Due to the fact that bonds between peasants and their tenants were relatively strong, the priest mostly registered the families' place of living in parish registers. So it is possible to track *Heuerling* families at least during their early family phase, as long as children were born. Just one example: Anna Maria Meyer, born in 1801, was a daughter from a *Heuerling* family in Löhne. She married twice, in 1827 and, after the death of her first husband, again in 1833. Her six children were born between 1828 and 1841. We see her in 1828 and 1830 on the 5 ha-farm 'Löhnebeck No. 22', owned by Johann Ernst Nolting. In 1833, we find her on 'Löhnebeck No. 20', a 3 ha-farm of a peasant named Friedrich Brinkmann. In 1834, she lives on 'Löhnebeck No. 14' (4 ha), in 1837 on Brackmann's 8 ha-farm 'Löhne

³ Calculated from census lists of 1829 and 1850 of several municipalities in the Groningen clay region, including Leens in the Marne in 1829.

königlich 27'. From 1838 on until her death in 1843 she lived on the farm of Johann Heinrich Hamelmann, 'Löhne königlich No. 5', with 13 ha the largest farm of her *Heuerlinge* tenancy. We have no sources on the precise contracts between peasants and *Heuerlinge* for Löhne, but it is known from research in a nearby region that these contracts usually had a very individual design. Even on the same farm, different *Heuerling* families could have strongly varying contracts (Schlumbohm 1994). So there is good reason to assume that these families moved to a new farm whenever they could get better conditions elsewhere. There are also cases where *Heuerlinge* stayed on one farm for many years: Anna Catharina Dove (born 1796) was born on 'Löhne königlich No. 20', her parents' farm. When she married in 1822, 6 out of her 14 siblings were still alive, and her elder brother Casper Heinrich, who was her father's farm successor, was already married for 20 years. She gave birth to seven children, so we know that she and her husband lived on the farm at least until 1840. There is only one exception: in 1830, when her third son was born, the priest recorded her address as 'Löhne königlich No. 21', but this was quite probably just a mistake.

We don't have much information on living conditions of the *Heuerlinge* in Eastern Westphalia, but our knowledge on day labourers is even smaller. In the central Westphalian parish Borgeln, about two out of three families made a living by day labouring and had no landed property at all. It is pretty clear that they lived somewhere on the farms, but since even the priest did not register the current address, we face an almost complete lack of sources about their whereabouts. People in this region remember that there have been people living in barns, or in small baking houses placed apart from the main farm house. But where these families lived, how long they stayed in one place, and how their individual relations with peasants were shaped is beyond our knowledge. However, the lack of kinship and godparent relations between peasants and day labourers hints at very loose and distant relations in Borgeln, whereas peasants and non-peasants shared the same social networks in Eastern Westphalian Löhne (C. Fertig 2012). Next to these landless labourers, in central Westphalia, many of the non-peasant families were owners of small houses (somewhat comparable with Groningen), but also of small plots of land. These families often lived from day labouring, though this group of smallholders also comprised artisans and shop-keepers.

Like in Groningen, servanthood was a normal stage in the lifecycle of the children of Westphalian landless labourers from about the age of 14 until they married, making a wage career hopping from one farm and farmer family to the other often in the neighbourhood of the house of their parents, though in central Westphalia there was also a lot of migration during this life-phase. After marriage the former servants established a household of their own, in a rented or owned house as *Heuerlinge* or day labourers.

The rise in population resulted in an increasing share of the landless or near landless households in both Westphalia and Groningen. Figures for the whole of the Groningen clay region show for instance an increase from 27.4% of the labourer households around 1780 to 39.5% around 1850 (Paping 1995). This development was made possible by a sharp increase of arable land from 47% in 1807 to 77% in 1862 in the Marne (calculated from Priester 1991). As arable land demanded more labour, and in general agriculture became more labour intensive, there was usually enough work to do on the large farms for the rapidly increasing group of landless farm labourers in the first half of the nineteenth century. Numerous new dwellings must have been built to house this increasing agricultural working class. For Groningen we

know that only some of these new houses were positioned near large farms that were scattered, and most of them were built in the villages.

Although two-third of the labourer households in Groningen owned their house around 1800 (66% in a sample of 213 between 1770/1810 and 69% in a sample of 562 1806/1814) this diminished during the next half a century to only 37% in 1862 (statistical information on 7,182 households in the Groningen clay region: Paping 1995). But even those who owned one, regularly bought and sold their house, sometimes to move to a different village, but also to change houses within a village (see also table 3). Those labourer families living in rented houses were even more mobile, showing a short-distance migration behaviour comparable to that of the *Heuerlinge*. The increasing loss of the house-ownership of Groningen farm labourers in the first half of the nineteenth century made them in this respect more similar to the Westphalian working class.

3.c. Households of non-agrarian families

In the Westphalian villages there was also a group of households making primarily a living outside agriculture, but this group was more limited than in the Groningen countryside where they formed between one third and 40% of the households (compare table 1). The combination of non-agricultural work with small scale agricultural activities seemed to have been more important in Westphalia than in more specialised Groningen, though in the last region the most well-to do of these households often also had the user right of substantial stretches of land, usually between 1 and 5 ha (table 2).

Differences within the non-agricultural group were large, as some of these households were wealthy, while others were poor. Wealth was usually depending on the investments necessary to perform the specific job, either in physical or in human capital (think of school masters, reverends and physicians). A miller was relatively rich as the mill is expensive; for a smithy, bakery, inn or shop, a larger building to live in was needed, while also money had to be invested in for instance merchandise or equipment, so families occupied with these trades were also relatively well-off, though perhaps less than a miller. Living space and workshop were joined in one house in which production and consumption both took place. However, for tailors, shoemakers (not having a tannery), carpenters and pedlars the size of the house was far less important, as their work did not demand much space and specific installations. As the investments for these jobs were low, these households were usually the least well-off of those active outside agriculture (Paping 2010).

Relevant was also if the economic activities at the house provided enough labour opportunities for all family members or not. Some occupations as reverend, school master, civil servant were strictly connected to an individual person, usually the male head. In these cases the wife and grown-up children could find other work; however only if they needed to, as the income of the household head was usually quite high. However, in a society where on the job training was the rule due to the dominance of small-scale enterprises employment and the preference for live-in personnel, children, especially sons often had to leave the household to invest in human capital. In those households running a small enterprise outside agriculture, sons usually could join their father in craft or business. In inns and shops it was easy for wife and daughters to also participate in the work, however, in most crafts it was not, because of

gendered norms on who should do what work. An exception was the making of cloths, that was both done by male tailors and female seamstresses.

A condition for wife and children to help was of course also that the business at home offered enough work for everybody. In some cases the small size of this business combined with economic necessities forced children to leave the household to go and work elsewhere. Sons left to become for instance an apprentice of an artisan in another household and build up human capital, while daughters found a living as a maid. For a few occupations, sons had to leave the parental households to go to a secondary school or university. Those non-agriculture households with a higher demand for than supply of labour, on the other hand, hired extra (usually live-in) personnel as maids in an inn or shop and apprentices in a smithy or bakery. Nearby cities also offered a lot of opportunities for rural juveniles to find work and learn for other occupations than was possible in the paternal home. However, this move to the cities only really took-off in the second half of the nineteenth century in both Westphalia and Groningen fuelling industrialisation and urbanisation.

To conclude, the paternal house offered for the children in the non-agricultural households often the opportunity to learn the parental trade. However, this was also a limitation of staying at home as their possibilities were nearly completely restricted to only this trade as the lifecycle servant system also was prevailing within the crafts and other occupations. Consequently, many children in these households left the paternal house in their teenage years to build up a career elsewhere. As a result the household-size of rural families having a non-agricultural business was – at least in Groningen with 4.9 (N=1145) – larger than of labourers, but much smaller than of farmers.

4. Family attachment to the house/farm

In the previous section we discussed that the house formed to a diverging extent the backbone of the rural household economy. It was especially extremely important for farmers, a large part of the non-agricultural households and in a rather specific way for *Heuerlinge*, while less so for farm labourers and the rest of the non-agricultural households whose economic activities were less related to the house itself. In this section we want to investigate the form and degree of the actual attachment between families and their houses/farmsteads as both their most valuable assets and the basis of their family economy. For this actual attachment we will study at first the way of transferring farmsteads and after that of non-peasant houses to a new owner or principal user by looking at the changes in the heads of households living in specific buildings.

From table 3 it can be concluded that Westphalian families in both villages showed a very strong interest in keeping farms within the family, and consequently the whole farm transfer system was directed towards this goal. Including remarriages, in Löhne 13% of the farms with more than 5 ha were transferred to non-relatives, while in Borgeln this happened even only in 7% of the cases. This is in sharp contrast with the 52% of transfers in the Groningen Eastern Marne, where new inhabitants were not related to previous farmers, including the cases that the building was not used as a farmstead anymore. From these, in 8% of the cases the farmstead was disbanded, which in this period usually did not mean that the building was turned down, but that the land was disconnected from the farm and came in use of one or

more of the other farms. In Westphalia on the other hand, this happened very seldom, and only in cases of bankruptcies of farmers, that were rare due to the weaker connection to the market of the households. If you sell all your produce on the market as in Groningen you are much more depending on that market, than if you have partly subsistence agriculture with a surplus for the market. In the first case failing as a farmer means bankruptcy, in the second less to eat on the farm.

An example of the last is the farm 'Löhnebeck 6' in Löhne, also called 'Sudmeyer-sches Colonat'. Carl Friedrich Sudmeyer married in 1829, shortly after his father's death. His mother kept the farm until 1840, and when she handed it to her son, he had to take care of her debts of 1,126 Taler. There is little information who the creditors were, because in the land title registers we find only 250 Taler from 1831. But over the following years, Carl Friedrich Sudmeyer borrowed a lot of money, mostly from a priest in a nearby town: 600 Taler in 1841, 200 Taler in February 1842, and 150 Taler in October 1842. In October 1842, he also borrowed 200 Taler from another creditor, and again 100 Taler from the priest in the beginning of 1844. In 1845, the farm got into public sale, and was bought by Johann Friedrich Imort (*1812), son of Carl Henrich Imort (see for him also later on). This is one of the few examples where farms got into the hands of non-family. In Borgeln, we even did not find a single bankruptcy of a farm. There was only one case of public auction, when a house was purchased for 391 Taler. Only three years later, the buyer sold the house back to the former owner, for 390 Taler. The much lower turnover rate at the land market in Borgeln (table 3) was caused by the lack of bankruptcies in this wealthy region, and the widespread reluctance to sell any land at all.

Sometimes in Groningen very wealthy farmer families managed two farms for some time, with in one a labourer household or only live-in servants. The last thing happened for instance with the Hayemaheerd of Zuurdijk a farm of at least 60 ha in 1834. When the extremely rich Everdina Oudeman (1765-1834) widow of Roelf Eijes (1769-1809) died, she left only one grandson, with her son-in-law being remarried and living on another very large farm Stoepemaheerd in Zuurdijk. A farm account of the Hayemaheerd has been preserved for the period 1835-1843, showing detailed the expenditures of the farm during a period when about six live-in servants were living there alone.⁴ In 1847 grandson Roelf Eijes Torringa (1824-1885), due to inheritances the richest man of the Eastern Marne, married and settled with his bride on the Hayemaheerd. So in a lot of these cases the tie between family and house remained in existence, and as in the example, family descendants eventually returned to the farmstead. Also in several of the 5% cases that the farm was rented out on loose terms (usually six year contracts),⁵ family members later on returned to the farmstead. A son of Everdina Oudeman just mentioned, named Eije Roelfs (1793-1826) lived on smaller 20-ha farm in Zuurdijk, but died unmarried. After his death the farm was first inhabited by labourers, and was rented out in 1864, though in 1870 the widow of a daughter of Roelf Eijes Torringa returned, after which it was again rented out and in 1886 a son Eije Torringa (1857-1915) settled on the farm.

⁴ Groninger Archives, family Archive Torringa, inv.nr. 6.

⁵ Table 3: 11 of the 391 cases for 5-30 ha farms and 5 out of the 272 cases for 30+ ha farms were rented out to unrelated households.

Table 3. Distribution of recipients of transferred farms in the Eastern Marne (Groningen, 1750–1860) and Löhne and Borgeln (Westphalia, 1750–1860).

	Eastern Marne		Löhne		Borgeln	
	5-30 ha	30+ ha	1-5 ha	5+ ha	1-5 ha	5+ ha
Son	12.5%	29.8%	46.5%	49.2%	44.7%	55.9%
Daughter	8.4%	9.6%	14.9%	13.3%	28.9%	15.2%
Other near relatives	7.4%	8.5%	11.4%	9.9%	10.5%	12.8%
Total relatives	29.5%	47.9%	72.8%	72.4%	84.2%	83.9%
Widow remarrying	11.3%	13.2%	7.9%	14.4%	10.5%	9.0%
Unrelated new farmers	49.9%	33.8%	19.3%	13.3%	5.3%	7.1%
Empty / labourers / disappeared	10.5%	5.1%	-	-	-	-
Non-family	60.4%	38.9%	19.3%	13.3%	5.3%	7.1%
N	391	272	114	181	38	211

*Note: Westphalian figures include all cousins, nephews and nieces, uncles and aunts, including their marriage partners, while in Groningen these were only taking into account when there were no heirs or adult heirs, or if the successors themselves were descending from the farm. The non-family category comprises distant relatives and people without observable relationship.⁶

However, leaving all these kind of diffuse cases out of the analysis, still a staggering 40% at least of the times when a Groningen farm was transferred, it was sold to strangers to move out of family hands completely. This high percentage suggests a much lower attachment of the farmer family to a specific farm than in Westphalia. Of course the extent of transfers of farmsteads, and especially the sales to non-relatives must have been related to the size of the land market in a region. However, the causal direction is on first sight not clear. Did a large land market resulted in a smaller attachment of families to farmsteads, or was it this limited attachment that caused a large market to develop? Clearly, the way property rights of land had been organised must have greatly influenced the development of a land market.

Before 1750 the land market in Groningen was nearly completely restricted to the ownership rights of the land in the hands of lords, patricians, institutions and rich countrymen. The rights to use the land were yet of limited value; in the seventeenth century because of the flexible rents, and in the first half of the eighteenth century due to low agricultural prices.

⁶ The Groningen figures relate to transfers in the Eastern Marne parishes of Kloosterburen, Leens, Vliedorp Warhuizen, Wehe, Wierhuizen and Zuurdijk. See also Paping 2012; Paping & Karel 2011, for the use of a smaller version of the database. Empty means that the farm was empty (meaning without a farmer family household) at least five years. For Westphalia, the databases for the parish of Löhne (district of Herford) and Borgeln (district of Soest) cover family reconstitution data, combined with information on landed property from land title registers and cadastral surveys.

Nevertheless, already by that time there must have been a considerable market for farm buildings as such, to which as argued land user rights were connected. Research showed that already in the seventeenth century about half of the new inhabitants of farmsteads were unrelated to the former ones (Paping 2012). Whereas previously buildings were sold, in the second half of the eighteenth century the selling contracts always mentioned the sale of the farm building with the right to use the land. In 1756 a farm in Zuurdijk with the right to use 11 ha for 66 guilders and 3 dimes rent annually was bought by a farmer couple for only 580 guilders (being hardly the price of the building), while the farmer widow sold the same farm in 1782 with improved user rights and the same rent for a threefold 1,905 guilders.⁷ Around 1800 such a farm would have a market value of about 4,000 guilders and around 1850 about 6,000 guilders (roughly estimated from Paping 1995, p. 353-354).

As the farmers were the owners of these buildings they could sell them to the highest bidder. Already in the seventeenth century the formal owners usually complied by accepting the buyer as the new tenant of the land, and in the course of the eighteenth century they lost their formal influence even completely. In this way, an already flourishing market for farm buildings developed in a proper land market in the second half of the eighteenth century. Unfortunately, we do not have exact figures about the amount of (user rights of) land sold to non-relatives, but it might have been 2 to 3% annually, taking into account the figures of table 3.

In Westphalia, the situation was completely different. Institutional and legal barriers, especially the large influence of noble land owners on the tenancy, made it very difficult for a proper market in rights to use the land to develop, although it seems that this has changed to some extent in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The amount of traded land per year in this village was about 2.2% between 1830 and 1866; however, only 1.4% of the land was sold outside the family. In Borgeln, the amount was even much smaller. Here 0.7% of the land was sold, 0.6% outside the family. Mostly either a complete farm changed hands – although very seldom in number – or peasants supplemented their farm with an additional piece of land. Some parcels were also used to build new houses for land-poor households, but not for new farms (G. Fertig 2004, 2007). It is safe to state that in general the Westphalian land market was small, and farms were sold only for reasons of bankruptcy of the peasant household or of its emigration overseas. This situation is reflected in the extremely low share of strangers taking over farmsteads in Borgeln, and to a slightly lesser extent in Löhne, that at least had some land market (table 3).

In Löhne we also find two factors that might have stimulated the development of the land market. The first and possibly most important one is the overall economic weakness of the region after the first quarter of nineteenth century, as we can observe at the credit market. Farm owners seeking credit very often had turn to their neighbors if they needed money. This is very different in Borgeln: the quite wealthy farmers with very profitable farms avoided credit transactions within the village, and they had little difficulties to refund their creditors. However, farmers in Löhne were not very attractive debtors, so they could not attract creditors from the outside. They lent money from neighbors and relatives, and it happened again

⁷ Groningen Archives, 734-343, fol. 73v; 734-839, fol. 46.

and again that they had difficulties to return the money. In these cases, the sale of pieces of land could be a reasonable solution.

The second factor goes by the name of Carl Henrich Imort. He was born in 1782 as a farmer's son, but his brother received the parents' farm in 1826. He married in 1811; his wife was also the sister of a farm heir. Starting as '*Heuerling*' and shoemaker, Carl Henrich Imort succeeded in making an impressive career. Soon after his marriage he turns up as merchant, and in 1822 he bought a house and some land from the largest peasant in Löhne, starting his own farm. Over the following years he added more and more parcels to his farm, up to a farm size of 10 ha. More importantly, he gave credit to many people, and managed to make so much money that he could both buy complete farms for some of his children, and in addition arrange to equip the other children with large inheritance payments and find farm heirs as marriage partners. Imort and his wife had nine children, of whom seven reached adulthood. The two oldest sons received farms he had purchased; the third one married a farm heir. The second and the fourth surviving daughter also married farm heirs in Löhne, and the third daughter married a farm owner in a neighboring parish. The oldest daughter finally received the parents' farm, eight years after her father had died. In this region with impartible inheritance system many peasant children faced downward mobility, so this family's reproductive success is quite extraordinary. It is not possible to quantify the effect of this family's economic behavior for the development of a rather vivid land market, but this kind of economic activity is quite unique for both Westphalian villages. The example also demonstrates how much people in the Westphalian countryside were interested in their children's well-being and their status attainment, a quite widespread attitude (C. Fertig 2009).

The higher percentages of succession were made possible by a succession system of farmsteads in Westphalia wholly directed towards handing the farm over to the next generation. Usually a child would take over the farm when the situation of the family – as the health situation of the old parents or marriage plans of the younger generation – called for clarification of mutual rights and obligations. If we look only at the cases where the farm had been transferred to a child, we can distinguish clearly between peasant and small holder's successions. In general, sons had better chances to take over the farm than daughters. In Borgeln we observe a clear picture: On full farms, only one out of five transfers favoured a daughter. On very small farms and non-peasant houses, however, we find much more daughters. About 40% of these farms and houses had female successors. In Löhne, we find a similar picture: only one out of five farms beyond 5 ha went into the hand of a daughter, but one out of four smaller farms. So as a rule we can say that sons were favoured over daughters, but this attitude was much stronger on larger farms. Families were aware of the potential problems with a new man in the house, so old peasants very often kept the rights to manage the farm in these cases.

Sometimes widows and widowers married again, especially if they lost their partner rather early. If this resulted in new off-spring, it was not always beforehand clear if the farm would be handed over to a child from first or second marriage. Traditionally, it should be a son from the first marriage, but in practice people sometimes made daughters their successor or a child from the second marriage. In the eighteenth century, men often could only marry onto a farm as so-called '*Interimswirt*', a 'peasant-in-between'. After a clearly defined period of time, the new husband and the widow had to hand the farm to the *Anerbe*, the designated heir. In most cases, the farm was transferred when the young man – or in some cases the

young woman – reached adulthood. The older couple then lived in a separate part of the farm, as pensioners. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, there were still cases of this kind of arrangement, and there was also an initiative of the state administration to anchor it in the state laws in the 1830s. However, the peasantry was really not happy about this and other legal restrictions of their options to settle family affairs. The law had to be cancelled after only a few years (Rouette 2001).

In some cases widowed peasants decided to keep the farm as single owners for quite a long period. While single parents with small children usually married again fast, there is a considerable difference between widows and widowers with older children. Whereas widowers tended to hand over the farm after a short period, widows often kept the management and the property rights for a long time. It seems to have been easier to substitute the peasant by an adolescent son than to have a daughter keep house. What is more, it was often more important for widows to secure their position on the farm by keeping the property rights as long as possible. We observed the other side of the coin in contracts established by widows: they were often worried about their well-being, and tried to guard themselves against potential problems as good as possible (C. Fertig, Lünemann & G. Fertig 2005).

Many times the question of succession was kept open when a surviving parent remarried. This wasn't a problem as long as the inheritance rights of the children were secured in any way. In many farm transfer contracts families motivate the timing of the transfer either with feebleness or illness of the older generation, or with marriage plans of the farm successor. A major goal of these contracts was the balance of interests between the young and the old generation, and also between farm successor and his or her siblings, who received their inheritance payments. In principle, every child could become successor, as long as he or she was able to perform the tasks of a farm owner and was able to satisfy the needs of the other family members, although the traditional *Anerbe* in Löhne was the youngest and in Borgeln the oldest son. In both Westphalian villages, almost half of all farm successors were already married when they took over the farm. As far as we know from the contracts, those couples already lived and worked on the farm before they became regular farm owners. They had worked under the control of the old generation for months or even years before they attained property rights and economic independence.

As mentioned, the situation in Groningen was completely different, with farms passing rather easily to non-relatives. There are a lot of reasons for this. Firstly, many children were already married and had settled on a farm of their own (as they rarely lived together with their parents, in this nuclear-family region) when the farm was freed due to the death, or less often the retirement of the last parent. This made succession on the parental farm rather unattractive, though some children really returned. Secondly, it might have been easier to sell the farm in case of retirement or division of the inheritance, as the sale makes the money immediately available. Thirdly, quite a lot of farmers were not able to survive financially as farmers – in this market-oriented economy quite a risky business, due to the changing grain prices – making it necessary to have both agricultural skills (getting a high production) and economic skills (getting good prices) to earn enough to pay the high and largely inevitable annual costs, including mortgage interest, taxes, and wages of labourers and artisans. Consequently, sometimes farmers really went bankrupt, or else were forced by creditors to sell the farm, ending up as farm labourers or in the best case shop- or inn-keepers (Paping & Karel 2011).

The difference between large farms and small farms in the eastern Marne in table 3 might also indicate that there could have been a preference for family succession on the farmstead, but that many families with smaller farmsteads could not afford such a strategy. The families on very large farms were usually wealthy, making it easier to establish that a child, especially a son, would be the next farmer on the farmstead. Only a quarter of these farms went to a daughter, while for farms between 5 and 30 hectare this was about 40%. The figures suggest that an ideal of having a farm where the son will take over the business in the end might have existed. There was, however, a large difference between theory and practise. In actual situations the farmer family decided for the most practical and sometimes only affordable solution, which was not rarely to sell the farm to strangers.

Table 4: Distribution of recipients of transferred houses in Kloosterburen (Groningen, 1750–1850) and Löhne and Borgeln (Westphalia, 1750-1860).

	Kloosterb. Labourers	Kloosterb. Non-agrar. households	Löhne	Borgeln
Son	9.0%	8.4%	30.8%	36.4%
Daughter	8.4%	1.2%	17.9%	26.4%
Other near relatives	8.4%	4.8%	12.8%	10.9%
Total relatives	25.8%	14.4%	61.5%	73.6%
Widow remarrying	3.69%	8.4%	2.6%	6.2%
Unrelated new house-owners	70.1%	76.0%	35.9%	20.2%
House broken down	0.6%	1.2%	-	-
N	167	167	39	258

Source: the figures for both Kloosterburen⁸ and Löhne and Borgeln⁹ are based on a reconstruction of the history of ownership and inhabitants of buildings.

⁸ Kloosterburen data until 1806 are the result of combining sales contracts with several lists and a wide range of other sources, including baptism and marriage registers similar to that of farms. The later period has been constructed using lists with inhabitants (some supplying only heads of households) and house numbers existing for 1806, 1812, 1826, 1838 and 1850, taxation lists for 1809-1814, 1816, 1819, 1826 and 1830 partly giving owners. In the birth and death certificates in civil registration from 1811 to 1847 usually house numbers are mentioned, though with some mistakes. Family relations were established using the complete digitalised dataset of births, marriages and deaths for the province of Groningen (allegroningers.nl).

⁹ For the two Westphalian parishes of Borgeln and Löhne data have been collected and linked in separate databases. Core of the databases are family reconstitutions, amended by land title registers (*Hypothekenbücher*, established during the 1820s), cadastre (complete lists for 1830 and 1866, documentation of modification on each year), farm transfer (and other family) contracts and records about manorial rights. From these sources we have information on vital events, family and kinship, godparents, landed property, land sales, credit, rights of lords, retirement contracts, inheritance payments, and other matters. All data are linked by nominal, non-automatic record linkage (see G. Fertig 2007 for a detailed discussion).

When interpreting the data from table 4, it has to be taken into account that they mostly relate to the first half of the nineteenth century, high population growth on the one hand and the rising share of the non-farming part of the households resulted in both Westphalia and Groningen in a very large rise in the number of ordinary houses during the period 1750-1850, as numerous ones were being built.

We have already seen that in Groningen in the second half of the eighteenth century at least two third of the labourer households owned their house, while in 1862 this share had fallen to only 37%, though the absolute number of houses had increased considerably. In the parish of Kloosterburen this rose from 75-80 around 1760, to 120 in 1806, and 148 in 1850. If we deduct the farmsteads (over 5 hectare of land use), the development was 49-55 houses around 1760, 89 houses in 1806 and 119 in 1850. Although this increase looks impressive, it was from 1806 onwards far below the growth of the working class and non-agricultural population. From a census list from Kloosterburen in 1812 we know that in hardly any house more than one nuclear unit lived, with the exception only of the poorhouse and a few often very temporary three-generation households. The rule was that in every house lived one family. The population registers of 1850 show this to have been changed in less than half a century. At that time 25 out of 119 ordinary houses besides the poor house inhabited two or sometimes even three unrelated households.

But even ownership of houses did not create enormous stability, because these houses were also sold quite often. Nevertheless, the difference with rented houses was large. Especially a lot of farm labourers, but also petty artisans were moving continuously around in the village, from one rented house to the other, comparable to the Westphalian *Heuerlinge* families. Next to this, a lot of land poor Groningen families migrated one or more times to other villages in the neighbourhood. The Kloosterburen data show that only a very limited part of both the labourer, artisan and shopkeepers families lived in the same house for more generations. Family succession was even very rare as table 4 shows, and the contrast with the farmers is large. Where for farmers the option of handing the house over to a family was – though not the rule – a quite usual strategy, for the other rural inhabitants of Groningen it was very exceptional, notwithstanding that the transfer procedure of houses was completely identical to that of farmsteads.

In Westphalia, on the other hand, families who managed to get a house tried to keep it within the family, and there was in many cases a relative willing to take over. Within land poor house owning families, daughters had better chances to receive the parents' property: one third of the houses passed to children ended up in the hands of a daughter in Löhne, and even 40% in Borgeln, where family attachment to peasant farms was strongest (see above). In this village only every fifth of all the transfers went into the hand of a person outside the family. In Löhne this share was much higher, one out of three houses went into the hand of an unrelated person. Two factors might help to understand the differences. First, the attachment of families to farms is also less strong in this region (see table 3). Second, non-peasant families mostly lived as *Heuerlinge* in rented houses, closely connected to a farmstead. So the normal case was to rent a house on a farm for a couple of years and then move to another farm. Only very few landless families owned houses, as this was not the usual way to establish a house-

hold in this region. Nonetheless those few families tried to keep the house and to give it to the next generation.

A different indication of the attachment of a family to a farmstead or house is also the naming system. In Westphalia, most of the farms had 'family' names that did not change over time. When a man married onto a farm, whether marrying a peasant's daughter or a widow, or even if he bought a farm, he would be called by the farm's name. The children would also have this name. This naming after a farm is not only a social habit: The name of the farm will also be registered as 'family name' in the birth register whenever a child is born to this family. This can be seen as a symbolic way to integrate the new man in the house, but also to show him his new place in the family system where the farm is an important social institution. There is e.g. the farm 'Elstermeyer' in Löhne, one of the largest and oldest farms in the place (Löhnebeck No. 1). In 1651 Heinrich Schwarze, the second son of the peasant on 'Löhne königlich No. 3', married Anna Elstermeyer, who died after a few years and left two children. He gave the farm to a son from his second marriage, Jacob Bernd Elstermeyer (*1664). Jacob must have died very early, because his wife married again only four years after their marriage, in 1694. She also survived her second husband, and married again in 1717. Both husbands were called 'Elstermeyer'. The farm successor was Bernd Elstermeyer (*1693), son of her first husband Jacob. Bernd was happy to live quite long, so he could hand the farm to his second son Johann Bernd (*1718). For the next two generations, the farm was taken over by sons, first Johann Heinrich Elstermeyer (*1752), then his respective son Carl Friedrich (*1787). Carl Friedrich had only daughters (of whom six reached adulthood), he was succeeded by his daughter Catharina (*1847) and her husband Caspar Heinrich Fischer. Again, all children and the husband were called Elstermeyer. The same is true for her second husband and their daughter. Another example can be found following two sons of Bernd Elstermeyer to the 'Usling' farm (Löhne königlich No. 3). The oldest son Bernd Heinrich (*1717, brother of Johann Bernd) married a widow, and he was called 'Usling' after the farm she had inherited from her deceased husband. He married again after her death. Many years later his younger brother Jobst (*1733) married his widow (from the second marriage), and he and his children were also called 'Usling'.

In Groningen most of the people did not have a proper surname but used patronyms before a Napoleon edict of 1811 forcing them to select such a name. From 1811 until into the second half of the nineteenth century patronyms and new surnames were combined, showing that the old system was not immediately swept away. Many farmer families took in 1811 a name of an old family to which they were in some way related like Toringa, Wiersema, Beukema, Doornbos, Borgman and Langeland, while for a lot we cannot clearly establish where they came from. However, some families chose around 1811 a new surname definitely related to the name of a farm. The inhabitants of the large Feddema-farm called themselves Feddema, and those of the Great Halsema-farm used the name Halsema (they were actually also descending via a lot of female lines from the old sixteenth century Halsema's) and those on the Westerhuis-farm named themselves Westerhuis. Descendants – though several times via the female line – kept control of the farm for a very long period, and at this moment (2015) a family Halsema is still living on the Kloosterburen Great Halsema-farm.

Remarkably, however, such a choice of names did not necessarily signify a very firm family attachment to the farm as the following examples will illustrate. The children of de Ronde-farm in Wehe called themselves Ronda although their parents sold this 9-ha farm al-

ready in 1783, moving to the Small Baat-farm, taking it over of his brother, who acquired the Large Baat-farm, after which the brother's family and also the succeeding son-in-law called themselves Batema. Unfortunately, this family already had to give up the Baat-farm in 1816. Pieter Klaasen Baat and his family bought the Small Baat-farm in 1811 and they immediately took the same name. The Baarveld family on the other hand sold the Baarveld-farmstead in the same year 1811 they chose their surname. Even earlier similar things happened Michiel Klaasen Brongersma bought the Brongersma farm in Vliedorp in 1756 (from a family that later called themselves quite similarly Bronsema), but already sold it in 1768 moving to a large farm outside the Marne though keeping the name. Whereas using the farm name as surname in Westphalia symbolized the strong ties between family and farmstead, in Groningen the use of the farm name was just a simple solution for the family problem that surnames became compulsory after 1811, or it was a symbol of status to relate one's family eternally to a specific well-known farm.

In Groningen, the non-farm houses rarely had a name, and new names of non-farmer families were only seldom based on the geographical position of the house. For Kloosterburen there are only two examples. Laborer Klaas Cornelis called himself Van Dam, as he in around 1800 acquired a small house situated together with a farm at Dam. His widow still lived in this house around 1850, what was an exceptional long time for a laborer household to stay at the same place. The unmarried weaver Harm Hindriks and both his unmarried and married sisters were born in Oldenklooster, and all three chose the name Kloosterhuis in 1811. However, their parental home to which the name seems to refer had already been sold in 1788. Clearly even these two cases both do not suggest the existence of any close tie between family and a specific house for the non-farming part of the population in Groningen, reinforcing the conclusion based on the data on the transfer of their houses. In Westphalia, houses also did not have specific names, so residents were just called by their old family name. Usually children got their father's family name, and wives were either called by their own or their husbands family name.

5. The house/farm as an institution of social welfare

For families, the farm or house on the one hand constituted the most important store of wealth, and on the other hand formed the major means of existence, next to one's own labour for the family members. Because of these two aspects the farm and house could play a decisive role in securing the standard-of-living of the different family members. Several groups in society can be distinguished which were in theory relatively vulnerable, because they often did not have enough earning power to satisfy their basic needs with their own hands. Usually a healthy married couple was able to care of their young children. Though for widows and unmarried mothers with young unproductive children it was less easy to meet ends, and this was of course even more the case for orphans. Another potentially vulnerable category were old-aged whose physical power began to diminish, so they could not rely anymore on their labour to make a living. A third category are adult unmarried people, who if they were young and healthy could make a good living, however, this did not apply to the disabled and the older ones. The lifecycle servant system functioned mainly for the young-grownups below the

age of 30 to 35, consequently, for older persons it became more difficult to find work, while it was rather unusual for bachelors and spinsters to set up a household of their own.

Taking into account their two important characteristics (embodying wealth and labour opportunities) farmsteads and houses in theory could play an important role in providing social security to the vulnerable groups just mentioned acting as the basis of the rural social welfare system. Again the extent to and the way in which farmsteads and houses played this role differed strongly between Westphalia and Groningen.

In Westphalia, the attachment to a house was the main strand to any kind of secured retirement. Most old peasants wanted to stay in the house if they transferred the farmstead to a family member belonging to the younger generation, and some wanted to have an alternative plan in the transfer contract. Quite frequently, old peasants made the arrangement where they gave away the right of ownership, though still kept the right to manage the farm. The goal was to tie one child (and its family) to the farm, as workforce and future care-taker, while the older generation kept control of the farm. Some contracts make this obligation for a succeeding child to stay very explicit; in others it is just obvious. There were only few cases where the older generation gave up their ownership right and moved immediately to a separate house on the farm. During the process of handing over, almost every old couple or widowed parent declared to stay in the young people's household. Yet this does not necessarily mean that these arrangements persisted for a long time. Since peasant families often made assignments for optional separation in these farm transfer contracts, we know that they thought about potential conflicts. But because they had everything settled right in the beginning, there was no need to make another contract about separate households, and other sources about household composition are not available.

Old Westphalian peasants could have these retirement claims secured in land title registers. This is a very important point concerning the question who was responsible for the old people's well-being: The farm and the farm owners were obliged to pay or provide for the old peasants' retirement, not the children. If e.g. the succeeding child died early, a new farm owner would still be responsible for the old people, regardless if there was only the surviving spouse or a new marriage partner on the farm. Even if the farm was sold, the burden to take care of the former owners stayed with the farm, and they did not move to another child. Thus real estate was the most important means of social security for the aged, and other social groups, like day labourers, tried to copy the peasants' system of old age security.

Old day labourers made the same kind of contracts in Westphalia as peasants, no matter how small their houses were. They stayed in the house, and the young succeeding generation had to take care of them. In this case there was indeed no option to separate into two different households within the same house, because the house was too small. The house of a day labourer or craftsman in this way functioned as his or her provision for old age. There are cases where couples had no children, or the children had no interest in the house, because they had married onto a farm or into a different house. Often these house owners made transfer and retirement contracts with other people, for instance some distant relative, the neighbouring peasant or someone who is not family at all. Also in this case, they gave away the property right and got in return the right to stay in the house and to be supported by the new owner(s), who either were also living in the house or elsewhere, e.g. when a peasant bought the house. If house owners had disabled or retarded children, they also often bound their successors to keep them in the house and to take care of them. This system meant that for a child to succeed

on the parental farmstead or in the parental house was not only beneficial, but also involved accepting a lot of obligations towards vulnerable family members. As a consequence of this role of house or farmstead there were quite a lot of complex and extended households in Westphalia (Schlumbohm 1994). Unfortunately due to the missing population or household lists, this cannot be shown in detail for Borgeln and Löhne.

Two examples for handing over contracts of non-peasants in Borgeln: In December 1862, the 63-years old day labourer and shoemaker Christoph Remmert (*1799) and his wife Anna Maria Hägger (*1800) handed their house to their daughter-in-law, Maria Sträter and her new husband. The son and first husband of Maria Sträter (*1831) had died in spring and left her with a one-year-old son. In the beginning of December she married the day labourer Albert Rademacher (*1826). The young house owners had to leave two trunks and a bed to the old couple. They also reserved a bedroom and Christoph's workshop and his tools, so they would be able to maintain themselves as long as possible. They also kept a piece of acre that had to be cultivated by the Anna Maria and Albert, but Maria and Christoph would keep the fruits. In case Christoph Remmert was not able to earn enough money any more, the new house owners would have to maintain Christoph and Anna Maria. Anna Maria lived until 1870, Christoph until 1877. When he died, his daughter Elisabeth (*1839) was still alive, but in the house transfer contract she was only receiving an inheritance payment, yet was not mentioned as someone responsible for her parents' well-being.¹⁰

In August 1824, Maria Hense (*1757) handed her house to Christoph Brinkmann (*1793), who married a few weeks later. For all we know, the two contractual partners were not related, neither by kinship nor by godparent relations. Maria Hense's husband had died three years before, and her only daughter two years before, leaving a widower and three children. Her son Heinrich (*1793) had married in 1817 and was called 'peasant', yet his real estate had only about 0,5 ha in 1830 (*Güterverzeichnis*). Although Maria's father had a farm of about 8 ha (that was now owned by her stepbrother), and her mother also was born a peasant's daughter, this was not the field where she looked for help when she became old. Her successor Christoph not only had to leave a room, a bed, and a trunk to Maria. He had to *"keep her in the house, support her with clothes, heat, and washing according to her age and rank, and take care of her appropriate funeral"*. If she would not be satisfied with his maintenance, it was up to her to leave the house and demand the total of 10 Taler per year. Above these provisions Christoph had to pay an inheritance compensation of 40 Taler to Maria's children and grandchildren respectively. Maria Hense died in 1826, but the relations between the two families persisted: in 1828, Heinrich became godparent to Christoph's second child, Heinrich Brinkmann.¹¹

This contract is very typical for house transfers of non-peasant families, how they settle their mutual interests during intergenerational transition. Yet in this case, the contract was closed between people without any kinship bond. There are other examples demonstrating that even when a house left the family, the contract between (older) house owner and (younger) successor was designed like a farm transfer contract. Except for cases when a peasant bought a house (for one of his non-succeeding children, or to remove it from a certain place),

¹⁰ Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Abt. Westfalen, Grundakten Soest, Nr. 8898, p. 42

¹¹ Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Abt. Westfalen, Grundakten Soest, Nr. 6607, p. 7.

the usual way was to live together in the transferred house and to pay the house by maintaining the old owner and compensation for his or her children.

In Groningen, the house seldom played a comparable role. Only in very few cases the transfer contracts mention that a surviving parent was allowed to stay on the farm, and for other formal obligations there is even no proof at all, except for the payment in two or three years of very substantial amounts of money. Consequently, the share of extended or in other way complex households remained rather small with 10% in a sample of census list of municipalities in the Groningen clay region, even under the farmers this regarded only 13% of the households (labourers 9%, employers and self-employed in industry and services 11%). In 6% of all households three generations were living together. However, if we follow these households over time, this living together is rarely a step in the process of family succession, as a lot of the married children living with their parents were not taken over the parental households. Many times a three-generation household was temporarily created because a newlywed couple did not yet find a house of their own. Children born out of wedlock were quite often living with their grandparents, either with or without their mother. And sometimes at the end of his or her life an old father or mother moved in with one of their children, presumably often because they were no longer capable to take care for themselves.

The market value of the house or the farm constituted in a sense the pension of the old-aged. Most frequently old-aged clung to their house if possible, sometimes until they could no longer afford it. Keeping the ownership of the house and the control of the family business was guaranteeing an income stream even at old age, when one's own physical strengths started to diminish. On the one hand needs started to diminish as the household shrunk in size, and on the other hand one still had the benefits of the garden, and perhaps directly own some extra money by their own hands, or indirectly by controlling the family business. According to the death certificates both males and females, and either day labourers, artisans or shopkeepers often still had an occupation until they were very old. Poorer house owners could take in a (usually unrelated) lodging family as a survival strategy, what happened as we have seen more often in between 1812 and 1850. However, the large turn-over of such renting families suggests there were no other than financial obligations between them and the house owner.

Another strategy for the more well-to-do old-aged was to sell the farmstead or house to free capital to finance retirement. Contracts even between parents and children to care for their aging parents in return for taking over the house were rare, although not completely absent. A succeeding child usually paid large sums to obtain the farm. In May 1807 Corneliske (c1735-1809) – widow of Jacob Cornelis since 1780 and at that time living in the village of Ulrum – sold her farm of 40 ha doing 236 guilders annual rent in Warfhuizen for 7,500 guilders to her son Enne Jacobs Vonk (1774-1819),¹² who had married just a year before, another 1,200 guilders had to be paid to the noble land owner to ensure the eternal user rights of the land, which had not been settled before. Although the 72-year old widow first settled somewhere else, she might have returned to the farm in the last months of her life, as she died in Warfhuizen in 1809.

¹² Groningen Archives, inv.nr 734-1516, fol. 90, and fol. 57.

Rich old farmers and middle class people could retire in this way, settle in a house in one of the villages and live of the revenues of their former possessions. So they could prevent living together with a married couple, with all the accompanying complications, which was in Groningen by many families seemingly seen as an unattractive option. However, the less the value of the property, the less this was a feasible strategy. In that case the selling of the house was usually the first step to poverty. Next to this, a growing group of households in the first half of the nineteenth century did not own any real estates at all. Members of these poorer households had a very big risk to become destitute at the end of their life, reflecting Seeböhm Rowntree's poverty lifecycle. In Groningen, family members, even their grown-up children, did not seem to have much formal obligations towards these old people. The only responsibilities were that parents should take care of their off-spring, and children were under the guardian of their parents until about 25.

Often it was not the family living in the family house who acted as a social safety net, but it was the poor relief board. Around 1810 some 5% of the rural population was receiving poor relief to some extent, a percentage that was rising to 10% in the fifties of the nineteenth centuries (Paping 1995). Although these shares seem at first sight rather low, one has to take into account that about one third of the rural society was rich enough to avoid needing poor relief during any period of the family life cycle. The poorer parts of population only depended (partly) on the dole during certain phases of this life cycle. Actually, a quite large part of the Groningen labourers and petty artisans, perhaps even a majority, were receiving gifts during at least part of their life.

Increasingly in the first half of the nineteenth century poor relief boards started to not completely maintain poor households, but to supplement their other sources of income. Consequently, average sums of money paid per pauper were falling considerably in this period. Some households received regularly a small amount of money per week (a quarter or half a guilder) and for instance half a bread, and peat to burn in the winter, others even less. The most problematic cases were usually concentrated in a poorhouse owned by the board. Although, there were temporary predecessors at other places in the parish, in Kloosterburen around 1825 a special building for housing the poor came into being, originally a weaver's house. Johann Gerhard Hermann Werning (1787-1850), born in Emsdetten in Westphalia, and married to a weaver's daughter whose grandfather started to weave in this house around 1750; his living-in mother-in-law (died 1828) was still owning the house. However, having five small surviving children and a crisis in weaving because of industrial competition from elsewhere, they all became destitute around 1825 and the Roman Catholic poor relief board turned their house into a poorhouse, where they were allowed to stay for some years. The cadastral map of 1832 shows a long small building, if we look at later examples of poorhouses it consisted of a row of very small rooms each inhabited by one or more poor.

Thanks to some census lists (1826, 1838 and 1850) and the house numbers in the civil administration we can construct that between 1825 and 1850 at least 23 nuclear family units stayed in the poorhouse for longer or shorter periods. Taking into account that the about half the population of Kloosterburen was Roman Catholic, perhaps a quarter of the families had stayed in the poorhouse for some time. Most of the inhabitants were older widows, widowers and also one older bachelor, who according to the death registration spent their last years or months here, though children were not born here, except for one born out of wed-lock. In that last case first the mother gave birth in 1828 to a second illegitimate child and died shortly

afterwards in the poorhouse as did her second child. Twenty years later her first child was also living here with an illegitimate child. Only in one case a young widow with very young children found refuge in the poorhouse.

Interestingly, most of the elderly people living in the poorhouse had still owned a house around 1806 (when nearly all families owned a house in Kloosterburen), but had to sell it some years later. It has to be remarked that quite a lot of these elderly poor had children who were married and had a household of their own as farm labourers, tailors and carpenters. This suggests that the housing of their older parents was not felt as a responsibility of these children, so they had to go to the poorhouse. A nice example is Remt Scheltes Halsema (1773-1853), originally a small farmer who later became a labourer, but still owned as a widower two houses in 1830. At least from 1838 onwards until after 1850 he lived in the poorhouse, although his oldest married daughter had a small farm in Wehe, his oldest married son was a farm labourer moving to Texel (Holland), his four other daughters married a shoemaker, a tailor and farm labourers (two) and were all living in or near Kloosterburen. However, no child was prepared to house their impoverished father in his last years, even though the daughter marrying a shoemaker took over one of his houses.

Poorhouses were of minor importance in the Westphalian countryside. For the two parishes Borgeln and Löhne we did not find evidence for a local poorhouse. Only little research on poorhouses has been done until now, and mostly it's from the perspective of the institutional organization. The gentry, e.g. in the nearby Münsterland, endowed poorhouses in many places. The residents mostly were old and alone, unable to provide for a sufficient income. These people brought all their belongings with them, lived in separate rooms, and had to take care of their daily needs. There were no personnel, and no communal feeding, but all residents lived on their own means. The poorhouse offered shelter and financial support, but the inhabitants mostly still had different sources of income (economy of makeshift). In some cases, the officials tried and housed poor people in households, in part paying for accommodation, but the poor also had to work for the household (Bernhardt 2012, Lerche 2008).

Houses and farms were central for security in old age in Groningen and Westphalia, although in very different ways. In Groningen the house's value on the market enabled aging people to arrange for their old days. When the house was not worth much, or people belonged to the landless group, the poor relief system usually came into the picture. If the aged needed support, it was as probable to find them in the poorhouse as with one of their children. The frequent notion of children's value for old age security, as found in theories about the 'value of children', cannot be confirmed by our research. This is also true if we look at the Westphalian villages. Again there is no evidence that children were seen as protection against poverty in old age. The house and the farm were central in Westphalian plans for old age provision, but it followed a completely different logic. Farm and also house owners tried to keep their real estate in the family, and handed it to one of their children whenever possible. In return, they stayed either in the household or in a separate building near the farmstead, and it was their successor's duty to maintain them for the rest of their life. Even if the property went to someone who was not kin-related, e.g. because of the death of the heir and the remarriage of the surviving spouse, or even if a house was handed to a non-family person, the old people adhered to the traditional system of provision on the farm or in the house.

6. Conclusion

The meaning of the house for peasant and non-peasant families in the Dutch province of Groningen and the Prussian province of Westphalia in eighteenth and nineteenth century differed substantially. Even though both belong to the north-western European family system, farmers had in both cases strong property rights and the regions were rather close to each other geographically, it became clear that these rural societies adhered in general to two structurally completely different general models.

In the first model – rather well-known in the literature for many rural societies – the family and the house were strongly attached to each other, both economically and symbolically. The family house formed the backbone of the society, and family strategies were mainly directed towards keeping the house within the family. Especially peasant farms mostly went into the hands of children, or else another near relative. Such a system could of course only exist if the family had considerable property rights concerning their houses and farmsteads they lived in, for instance as freeholders or hereditary tenants. Only in exceptional cases farms and houses were sold to persons outside the family, for instance when the family ran into heavy debts.

As this system is usually found in rather ‘traditional’ societies where market dependence of households is relatively weak, the role of money is limited and the market for real estates is not well-developed, bankruptcies are rare. Economic distress of families in these societies does not result in extensive borrowing but in lowering consumption. The continuity of the family farm or house over the generations was secured by a system of impartible inheritance of estates combined with monetary compensation of siblings. Also, the farm/house did provide the pension of old peasants (who organised that they could stay, maintained by their successor), provided shelter for disabled and juvenile family members, and could even sometimes act as a harbour for other children in times of crisis. In this way, it also played a crucial role in the local social welfare system. Consequently, all family members benefited to some extent directly or indirectly from the well-being of the farm or other family business, having an interest in keeping the farm intact, what strengthened the ties between family and house, and at the same time resulted in more large complex and three-generation households.

The best example of this model were the peasants in both villages in Westphalia under study, although there are some signs of weakening due to the rising importance of the market in the economy, resulting in a development of the land market in the course of the nineteenth century. If feasible, other Westphalian families owning some real estates as for instance houses were also adhering to this model, but because of their financial vulnerability they were less successful in preserving the house within the family than peasants. On the other hand, a numerous and steadily rising group of farm and proto-industrial labourer families in Westphalia did not have any possessions and were often continuously moving around between dwellings in the village. For these landless poor, any attachment to a house was only a theoretical option. Study of this often neglected rural groups – comprising for instance about the majority of Westphalian rural societies – show that this first model of strong attachment between house and family becomes less relevant with rising rural proletariat, a development taking place in large parts of the countryside in western Europe in the nineteenth century.

In a second, seemingly more modern model, houses and farms in the countryside were mainly perceived by families and their members as embodying financial capital, floating on markets, to be bought and sold up to prevailing situations of families and individuals. The occurrence of this model seemed to be related to a nearly complete market dependence of households, and usually results in the existence of a vivid market in real estates. In this model houses of course also functioned as places of consumption, and of production for the peasant and the non-agrarian part of rural society. Nevertheless, family attachment to specific houses was quite limited, and family relations were apparently less strong than market considerations. They were bought as the basis for economic activity, and sold as valuable assets, or in case of financial problems, the last to appear more often due to the strong market dependence of the families. If possible, the older generation tried to keep the houses as long as possible to secure their life in old age, but not always with success. Since many children established their own households already before their parents died or retired, they usually had left the house by that time and often had bought a house a farm on the market. Consequently, near relatives were relatively few as successors and houses and farmsteads frequently moved into the hands of strangers.

In the Groningen countryside, we encounter this second model most clearly for the house-owning labourers and non-agricultural households, where family continuity in dwellings was rare, and there was also a large turn-over of houses. Farmer families showed a higher tendency to keep farmsteads within the family, but still every generation the majority of farms was sold. Only the largest farmers tried to adhere to some extent to the first model showing a strong preference for the succession of sons, although even their farms moved to non-relatives quite often compared to the Westphalian farms. Real estates like houses and farms themselves did not play a role in the Groningen social welfare system, however the value they embodied did, by securing the standard-of-living of the older generation. Interestingly, just like in Westphalia a large group of have-nots, mainly unskilled farm labourers and petty artisans, did not have any connection to the (rented) houses they lived in, and were continuously moving around. This group did increase sharply not only due to the rising share of labourers, but also because of the many labourer families losing their house in the first half of the nineteenth century. As the individual responsibility for family members was limited, social welfare had to be organised on a village level by the poor relief board, with a poorhouse to give shelter to impoverished old-aged and other paupers.

With the rise of the market, the money economy, the social welfare state and the diminishing number of farms in the nineteenth and twentieth century, the second ('modern') model presumably became continuously more of importance compared to first ('traditional') model in the countryside. However, possibly even more important is the development of a third and largely neglected group of unpropertied poor households active in unskilled wage-work, proto-industry and other badly rewarded work. Whatever function one's own house can have as a symbol of family identity, as a place to produce and live, as a store or value and as part of the social welfare system providing security for family members, it cannot play such roles for those vulnerable families who did not own a house or other real estates at all. It might be a good idea to concentrate future historical research much more on this 'hidden' rural underclass, which formed such a large part of the rural population at least in nineteenth century Groningen and Westphalia.

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